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Coalition of  
Municipalities Against  
**RACISM**  
AND DISCRIMINATION



CANADIAN COMMISSION FOR UNESCO  
COMMISSION CANADIENNE POUR L'UNESCO

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*The Canadian Commission for UNESCO is inviting municipalities from across Canada to join a Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination and be part of a larger international coalition being promoted by UNESCO. This booklet provides information that will be useful in understanding some of the important details of this Coalition. The first section describes the importance of establishing a Coalition in Canada and how municipalities and other organizations and individuals can become involved. The next section outlines a ten-point plan of action that sets out Common Commitments and sample actions which municipalities may undertake to counter racism and discrimination in their areas of responsibility. Next, a model declaration is provided that mayors are invited to sign signifying the municipality's commitment to join the Coalition. The final section sets out the international, national and provincial/territorial legal framework for human rights obligations in Canada, a solid foundation for supporting a Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination.*

# COALITION OF MUNICIPALITIES AGAINST RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION

COMMITMENTS

DECLARATION

HUMAN RIGHTS  
FRAMEWORK

# Why do we need a Coalition?

Canada along with its provinces and territories has an exceptional system of human rights laws and ratified international treaties. Nevertheless, as in other parts of the world, racism and discrimination continue to raise barriers against the development of individuals and groups. Racism and discrimination divide communities, pose a serious threat to peaceful coexistence and exchange among and within communities, imperil democratic and participatory citizenship, and entrench and aggravate inequalities within society.

Racism and discrimination continue to perpetuate the historical disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal peoples and other diverse groups, many of whom are members of Canada's most economically and socially marginalized communities.

Municipal governments, as well as other levels of government in Canada, along with local and national organizations, share responsibility and have an important role to play in combating racism and discrimination and fostering equality and respect for all citizens.

Local communities function at the most practical level and are most involved in the lives their residents. They are an ideal place to develop policies, programs and strategies, and take meaningful action toward eliminating racism and discrimination.

A Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination will help broaden and strengthen our society's ability to protect and promote human rights through coordination and shared responsibility among local governments, civil society organizations and other democratic institutions.

By taking action to combat racism and multiple forms of discrimination, municipalities are able to build respectful, inclusive and safe societies where everyone has an equal opportunity to participate in the economic, social, cultural, recreational and political life of the community.

# How will municipalities benefit?

By joining together in a Coalition, municipalities will be able to:

- Document and advance work within their own jurisdiction in combating racism and discrimination and building more inclusive communities
- Exchange practices and expertise among municipalities and groups in Canada and around the world
- Cooperate and share responsibility with other institutions and members of civil society to take action, including developing better tools to monitor progress

## Who is involved?

### UNESCO Paris

The call for a Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination is part of an international movement.

In 2004, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) launched the International Coalition of Cities Against Racism initiative. UNESCO's aim was to establish networks of cities in Africa, the Arab states, Latin America and the Caribbean region, North America, the Asia-Pacific region and Europe, interested in sharing experiences to improve their ability to fight racism, discrimination and xenophobia.

UNESCO is providing technical and scientific support to the development of world regional coalitions. It helped to establish the European Coalition, where more than 40 cities have joined so far. UNESCO is also providing assistance in establishing coalitions in Canada and in the Asia-Pacific region through assistance and liaison among world regional coalitions, documentation, dissemination of information, development of proposals for thematic discussions, organization of panels, development of research and evaluation tools, and other support as required.

### **The Canadian Commission for UNESCO (CCU)**

The Canadian Commission for UNESCO initiated the call for a Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination at the Roundtable on Combating Urban Racism held in Ottawa in January 2005. UNESCO's proposal, based on the European model and adapted for Canadian realities, was initially discussed with potential partners, including the cities of Gatineau, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto and Vancouver, as well as non-governmental organizations, researchers and human rights commissions. The idea of involving Canada in an international platform of exchange and solidarity against racism and discrimination was well received.

CCU is now working with a number of partners across the country and has had considerable success in reaching out to local communities and national networks.

### **Pan-Canadian Working Group**

A Pan-Canadian Working Group led by CCU with partners from across Canada<sup>1</sup> is spreading the word about the initiative. The Working Group has proposed a declaration of Common Commitments and sample actions and is holding workshops and consultations with a wide range of stakeholders, including communities, institutions, and various local, provincial, territorial and federal government bodies, to seek their support and input on the initiative. The Working Group has also proposed a process for municipal governments to join the Coalition and is helping to mobilize other stakeholders in these efforts. Several municipalities have already officially declared their intent to join the Coalition.

## Action Research

Research is key to developing indicators and standards, generating data, sharing best practices and measuring progress. Research being undertaken by UNESCO, along with other organizations and municipalities, will help to improve the capacity to track and evaluate the impact of actions taken to address racism and discrimination, and to showcase examples of effective policies and programs. UNESCO has sponsored a preliminary study to understand the use of indicators by municipalities as a means to evaluate the success of their policies and activities to combat racism and discrimination. The study, conducted by the Centre for Research on Immigration, Ethnicity and Citizenship (CRIEC)<sup>2</sup>, looked at indicators for the cities of Boston, Montreal, Saskatoon, Stockholm, Toronto and Vancouver. Those involved in related research are invited to contact the CCU to explore ways to contribute to the Coalition initiative.

# How can municipalities participate?

Municipal governments are invited to:

- Contact the Canadian Commission for UNESCO to learn more about the Coalition
- Discuss the benefits of joining the Coalition with community organizations and other stakeholders
- Send a letter from the mayor to the Canadian Commission for UNESCO expressing the municipality's interest in joining the Coalition
- Develop and promote the initiative within the municipality
- Take steps to have the municipal council pass a resolution to sign the Declaration of the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination, supporting the Common Commitments listed in this booklet and pledging to develop or reaffirm its own plan of action
- Evaluate activities already being undertaken by the municipality that correspond to one or more of the Common Commitments
- Identify new actions relating to one or more of the Common Commitments that the municipality will undertake in the coming years
- Monitor, evaluate and report on progress made
- Encourage other municipal governments to join the Coalition



# How can individuals and organizations contribute?

Eliminating racism and discrimination is everyone's responsibility. The role of local and national organizations, researchers, community groups, public and private institutions, other levels of government, and interested individuals is essential to the success of the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination initiative. Here are some suggestions for getting involved:

- Contact the Canadian Commission for UNESCO to learn more about this initiative
- Contact your municipality to learn if there are plans to join the Coalition
- Broaden awareness by discussing and sharing information about this initiative with other local stakeholders
- Conduct a consultation on the Common Commitments and sample actions against racism and discrimination and determine how your organization could participate in the Coalition
- Write to your mayor to encourage participation in the Coalition
- Ask for this initiative to be put on the agenda of your municipal council and organize members of your community to make a presentation to the council explaining the reasons why belonging to the Coalition could reinforce action against racism and discrimination and benefit the whole community

## COALITION

# COMMON COMMITMENTS AND SAMPLE ACTIONS AGAINST RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION

Municipalities are urged to develop their own plan of action in keeping with these ten Common Commitments addressing three areas of municipal responsibility:

- The municipality as a guardian of the public interest
- The municipality as an organization in the fulfillment of human rights
- The municipality as a community sharing responsibility for respecting and promoting human rights and diversity

In undertaking these Commitments and in developing unique plans of action for addressing racism and discrimination, municipalities are encouraged to take a participative approach that will engage Aboriginal peoples and initiate dialogue among diverse communities.

## DECLARATION

## HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK

# The municipality as a guardian of the public interest

## 1. Increase vigilance against systemic and individual racism and discrimination.

### Sample actions:

- Support or establish, in collaboration with community organizations, a monitoring and rapid response system or network to identify and respond to acts of racism, hate crimes and incidents, including bringing such incidents to the attention of the appropriate authorities.
- Support or establish a mechanism for consultation with a network of groups and individuals involved in the struggle against racism and discrimination (e.g. NGOs, Aboriginal organizations, youth, artists, police services, the judiciary, provincial and territorial human rights commissions, etc.).
- Report regularly on the incidence of hate crimes and responsive actions taken.

## 2. Monitor racism and discrimination in the community more broadly as well as municipal actions taken to address racism and discrimination.

### Sample actions:

- Make use of existing data and research, or initiate or facilitate appropriate collection and use of data, on incidents of hate activities, racism and discrimination in the community, and share results in a manner that advances human rights.
- Collect and evaluate data and information on racism and discrimination in specific fields of municipal endeavour, such as housing, recreation, culture and other social programs.
- Define achievable objectives and apply common indicators in order to assess incidents and trends in racism and discrimination, such as racial profiling, as well as the impact of municipal policies and programs.

### 3. Inform and support individuals who experience racism and discrimination.

#### Sample actions:

- Use awareness materials and campaigns to inform citizens about their rights and obligations, including available resources and mechanisms for prevention and redress, as well as penalties for racist acts or behaviour and other forms of discrimination.
- Establish or enhance existing complaint mechanisms within the municipality's authority (ombudsperson, anti-discrimination unit, etc.) to deal with allegations of systemic and individual acts of racism and discrimination.
- Establish protocols to liaise with organizations such as human rights commissions, legal clinics, and community advocacy or counselling services that can help facilitate prevention, interventions, and remedies for those who experience racism and discrimination.

## 4. Support policing services in their efforts to be exemplary institutions in combating racism and discrimination.

### Sample actions:

- Consult with local communities to hear concerns and receive input on responsive measures.
- Establish or enhance a comprehensive anti-racism and anti-discrimination vision statement and implement effective policies and procedures (including a complaints mechanism), as well as staff training to help prevent and respond to issues of racism and discrimination in policing services and in the community.
- Implement measures or programs to promote accountability of, and public confidence in, policing services, as well as ensure appropriate representation of Aboriginal and racialized groups in recruitment and at all levels of the organization.

# The municipality as an organization in the fulfillment of human rights

## 5. Provide equal opportunities as a municipal employer, service provider and contractor.

### Sample actions:

- Develop, implement, promote and enforce anti-racism and anti-discrimination strategies, policies and procedures, including complaints and dispute resolution mechanisms, within the municipal organization.
- Examine equity at a systemic level, such as auditing different aspects of the municipality's operations, including corporate planning, policy and program development, and procedures and practices with respect to employment, service delivery and contracting, as well as organizational culture; take steps to eliminate barriers; and finally, measure progress.
- Educate and sensitize elected officials and civil servants on mutual respect, citizenship and the obligation to protect and promote human rights.

## 6. Support measures to promote equity in the labour market.

### Sample actions:

- In partnership with local chambers of commerce, set up a certification program for businesses, organizations, and professional bodies to integrate mechanisms into their own organizations for combating racism and building inclusive and respectful workplaces.
- Facilitate monitoring and removal of systemic barriers that impede fair and equitable access for full participation of Aboriginal and racialized communities in the economic life of the municipality, as well as access to professions and trades for foreign trained professionals.
- Make business licensing renewals conditional upon non-discriminatory policies and practices.



## 7. Support measures to challenge racism and discrimination and promote diversity and equal opportunity in housing.

### Sample actions:

- Examine housing and urban planning policies and practices and address systemic barriers that have a discriminatory effect on Aboriginal and racialized communities, including the further marginalization of those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- Work with landlords and social housing providers, with the assistance of tenant associations and community organizations, including legal clinics, to adopt equitable policies and practices with respect to qualifying applicants and selecting tenants for market rent units consistent with human rights principles.
- Work with homebuilder, realtor, rental, hotel, tourist and hospitality associations to draw up anti-discrimination codes of practice for their respective industry businesses and organizations.

# The municipality as a community sharing responsibility for respecting and promoting human rights and diversity

## 8. Involve citizens by giving them a voice in anti-racism initiatives and decision-making.

### Sample actions:

- Take steps to facilitate and increase the representation of Aboriginal and racialized communities on municipal boards, commissions and committees.
- Organize regular community forums in collaboration with existing organizations and mechanisms in order to offer citizens an opportunity to discuss and be heard on issues of racism and discrimination in the municipality, including effectiveness of local policies and programs.
- Empower local NGOs and civil society to share information and take action against racism and discrimination.

## 9. Support measures to challenge racism and discrimination and promote diversity and equal opportunity in the education sector and in other forms of learning.

### Sample actions:

- Encourage the development of teaching materials that promote respect for dignity, human rights, intercultural understanding, dialogue and peaceful coexistence.
- Support partnerships between educators and front-line community organizations to reach out to vulnerable youth whose access to education is adversely affected by bullying and violence or discriminatory discipline policies or practices.
- Create a program to recognize schools for their anti-racism and anti-discrimination initiatives.

## 10. Promote respect, understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity and the inclusion of Aboriginal and racialized communities into the cultural fabric of the municipality.

### Sample actions:

- Provide equitable support to cultural projects, programs, events and infrastructure so that the cultural diversity and heritage of the community can be preserved and diffused in a fair and representative way.
- Support initiatives that increase expertise and capacity within ethno-cultural organizations to effect change in their communities and enable their members to participate fully in society.
- Promote awareness of the fact that integration of a community's cultural fabric, together with its economic, educational, social and security interests, strengthens and benefits the whole community.

**COALITION**

**COMMITMENTS**

**DECLARATION TO JOIN  
THE CANADIAN COALITION  
OF MUNICIPALITIES  
AGAINST RACISM  
AND DISCRIMINATION**

Municipalities wishing to join the Coalition are invited to sign this model declaration.

**HUMAN RIGHTS  
FRAMEWORK**

**Given that:**

1. The Canadian Commission for UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) is calling on municipalities to join a Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination and be part of UNESCO's international coalition launched in 2004; and
2. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities endorses the Call for a Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination and encourages its members to join; and

**Whereas:**

3. Municipal governments in Canada, along with other levels of government, have responsibilities under Canada's *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* as well as federal, provincial and territorial human rights codes, and therefore have an important role to play in combating racism and discrimination and fostering equality and respect for all citizens;

**Be it resolved that:**

4. The Municipality of \_\_\_\_\_ agrees to join the Coalition of Canadian Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination and, in joining the Coalition, endorses the Common Commitments and agrees to develop or adapt its own unique Plan of Action accordingly.
5. These Common Commitments and the Municipality's unique Plan of Action will be an integral part of the Municipality's vision, strategies and policies.
6. In developing or adapting and implementing its own unique Plan of Action toward progressive realization of the Common Commitments, the Municipality will cooperate with other organizations and jurisdictions, including other levels of government, Aboriginal peoples<sup>3</sup>, public and private sector institutions, and civil society organizations, all of whom have responsibilities in the area of human rights.
7. The Municipality will set its priorities, actions and timelines and allocate resources according to its unique circumstances, and within its means and jurisdiction. The Municipality will exchange its expertise and share best practices with other municipalities involved in the Coalition and will report publicly on an annual basis on actions undertaken toward the realization of these Common Commitments.

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(Date)

(Place)

**COALITION**

**COMMITMENTS**

**DECLARATION**

# **INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK**

Our international, national and provincial/territorial framework for human rights obligations in Canada provides a solid foundation for a Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination.

# International

Among the goals stated in the *Charter of the United Nations* (1945) is to “achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion” (article 1.3).

The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) stipulates that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights” (article 1) and that “everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status” (article 2).

The *United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination* (1963) specifies that “discrimination between human beings on the ground of race, colour or ethnic origin is an offence to human dignity and shall be condemned as a denial of the principles of the *Charter of the United Nations*, as a violation of the human rights and fundamental freedoms proclaimed in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, as an obstacle to friendly and peaceful relations among nations and as a fact capable of disturbing peace and security among peoples” (article 1).



The *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (1966) specifies that:

“Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to respect and to ensure to all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction the rights recognized in the present Covenant, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status” (article 2.1);

“Any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law” (article 20.2); and

“All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. In this respect, the law shall prohibit any discrimination and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any ground such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status” (article 26).

The *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (1966) similarly contains provisions that prohibit any form of discrimination, notably discrimination related to race, colour or national/ethnic origin.

The *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination* (1975) defines racial discrimination as “any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life” (article 1), affirms that, among other things, “any doctrine of superiority based on racial differentiation is scientifically false, morally condemnable,

socially unjust and dangerous” and requires states to “pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating racial discrimination in all its forms and promoting understanding among all races,” and in particular to “engage in no act or practice of racial discrimination against persons, groups of persons or institutions and to ensure that all public authorities and public institutions, national and local, shall act in conformity with this obligation” and to “prohibit and bring to an end, by all appropriate means, including legislation as required by circumstances, racial discrimination by any persons, group or organization.”

The case law of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, in terms of both individual communications and final observations toward the periodic reports from states, is consistent in its fight against discrimination.

The *Declaration and the Programme of Action* released by the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban in September 2001, appeals to the responsibility of various levels of state governments (federal and local) to combat racism and acknowledges that “the fundamental role of civil society in the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, in particular in assisting States to develop regulations and strategies, in taking measures and action against such forms of discrimination and through follow-up implementation” (par. 116 of the *Declaration*).

The reports of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental liberties of Aboriginal peoples, which denounce and document numerous situations of racism and discrimination, are also relevant.

# National

The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* stipulates: “Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability” (section 15.1).

Under the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, “all individuals should have an opportunity equal with other individuals to make for themselves the lives that they are able and wish to have and to have their needs accommodated, consistent with their duties and obligations as members of society, without being hindered in or prevented from doing so by discriminatory practices based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, disability or conviction for an offence for which a pardon has been granted.”

The *Citizenship Act* provides that all Canadians, whether by birth or by choice, enjoy equal status, are entitled to the same rights, powers and privileges and are subject to the same obligations, duties, and liabilities.

The *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* provides that the “Government of Canada recognizes the diversity of Canadians as regards race, national or ethnic origin, colour and religion as a fundamental characteristic of Canadian society and is committed to a policy of multiculturalism designed to preserve and enhance the multicultural heritage of Canadians while working to achieve the equality of all Canadians in the economic, social, cultural and political life of Canada,” (Preamble), affirms that multiculturalism “reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society and acknowledges the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage” (section 3(1)(a)) and that it represents “a fundamental characteristic of the Canadian heritage and identity and that it provides an invaluable resource in the shaping of Canada’s future” (section 3(1)(b)).

The recent *Canada's Action Plan Against Racism* encapsulates a six-point approach:

1. Assist victims and groups vulnerable to racism and related forms of discrimination
2. Develop forward-looking approaches to promote diversity and combat racism
3. Strengthen the role of civil society
4. Strengthen regional and international cooperation
5. Educate children and youth on diversity and anti-racism
6. Counter hate and bias

Under this plan, a number of departments (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Canadian Heritage, the National Secretariat on Homelessness, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and Infrastructure Canada) are working with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to explore diversity and immigration needs in urban policy-making and cooperation with civil society through an initiative called “Our Diverse Cities.”

The *Urban Aboriginal Strategy*, introduced in 1998 under the aegis of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, addresses, in partnership with stakeholders, the serious socio-economic needs of urban Aboriginal people and the need to improve policy development and program coordination at the federal and provincial level to reduce the level of disparity that urban Aboriginal people currently face, and to offer them better government programs that meet their local needs and priorities.

## Provincial/Territorial

Provincial and territorial human rights codes are premised on the principle that all human beings are equal in worth and dignity, and are entitled to equal protection of the law, as well as that every person has a right to full and equal recognition and exercise of his or her human rights and freedoms, without distinction, exclusion or preference based on some or all of the following grounds: race, colour, ancestry, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, civil, marital or family status, age, religion, political belief, language, ethnic or national origin, social condition, or disability. Discrimination exists where such a distinction, exclusion or preference has the effect of nullifying or impairing such rights, and human rights codes prohibit discrimination and harassment.

- 1 Participants in the Pan-Canadian Working Group led by the Canadian Commission for UNESCO included: the Aboriginal Youth Network, the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission, the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, the City of Toronto, the Ontario Human Rights Commission and the University of Montreal.
- 2 CRIEC Centre of Research on Immigration Ethnicity and Citizenship, University of Quebec in Montreal, February 2005. On line: [www.criec.uqam.ca/pages/frame\\_set\\_f/fs\\_cahiers\\_f.html](http://www.criec.uqam.ca/pages/frame_set_f/fs_cahiers_f.html)  
The study is also available from CCU. Please contact Elisabeth Barot at 1-866-669-4346 or at [elisabeth.barot@unesco.ca](mailto:elisabeth.barot@unesco.ca)
- 3 In undertaking these Commitments and in developing unique Plans of Action for addressing racism and discrimination, the municipality will take a participative approach that will engage Aboriginal peoples and initiate dialogue among diverse communities.

Supported in Alberta by:



Human Rights,  
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The Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination is endorsed by:



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Canadian Race Relations Foundation

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Alberta Urban Municipalities Association

[www.auma.ca](http://www.auma.ca)

## For more information

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For more information on UNESCO's International Coalition of Cities Against Racism and Discrimination initiative, visit: [www.unesco.org/shs/citiesagainstracism](http://www.unesco.org/shs/citiesagainstracism)